GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:436
ANSWERED ON:26.04.2005
CONFERENCE OF SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES
Swain Shri M.A. Kharabela

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether a meeting of agricultural experts from South Asian Countries was held recently at Hyderabad to discuss the fallout of globalisation and WTO`s policies on agriculture sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government has proposed to take some concrete steps to ensure that there is no adverse impact of WTO policies on agriculture; and

(d) if so, the details in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH)

(a) & (b) The Centre for Economic and Social Studies(CESS), Hyderabad, organized a South Asia Regional Conference (SARC) on Globalization of Agriculture in South Asia in March 2005. Representatives from India, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan participated in the round table meeting.

(c) & (d): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement Referred to in Reply to Parts (c) & (d) of the Lok Sabha Starred Question No.436 for answer on 26th April 2005 by Shri Kharabela Swain regarding Conference of South Asian Countries

(c) & (d) Under the existing provisions of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, India has undertaken to bind its primary agricultural products at 100%; processed foods at 150% and at 300% for some edible oils. Following the removal of quantitative restrictions on imports, India has negotiated the tariff bindings upwards in respect of some agricultural products like skimmed milk powder, maize, rice, wheat and millets, which were bound at 0% or at low bound rates during earlier negotiations.

India has not been required to reduce domestic subsidies to the agriculture sector since the total Aggregate Measure of Support (AMS) (product specific) is negative and the overall AMS remains well within the de-minimis.

In order to ensure that the farmers of the country are not put to any hardship, the Government has put in place a suitable mechanism for monitoring the import of sensitive items and is committed to providing adequate protection to the domestic producers by resorting to various WTO compatible measures which include appropriate calibration of applied tariffs within the bound levels and safeguard action under certain specified circumstances.

Further, the government is also implementing a number of development programmes to increase the competitiveness of the Indian farmer. These include introduction of improved farming technology, improved availability of inputs including water, credit and fertilizer and price support through the Minimum Support Price(MSP) scheme and Market Intervention Scheme (MIS).